

# The Orphans' Friend.

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From the Youth's Companion.  
MA'AM WINDLES.

BY MRS. M. A. DENISON.

She kept a little shop on Cherry Street, and sold taffy, which she made and palled herself. It was a sight to see her standing opposite a huge mass that looked like yellow dough, drawing out the thick skeins, till they seemed like spun gold, and glistened in the light.

Then she would take it down from the hook, measure it into lengths, cut it with a pair of enormous scissors, place it in large pans in the window, and it was ready for sale. And Ma'am Windles' candy never went begging.

The children of the neighboring schools called early and called late. At recess the girls came in with their pennies, always sure of a smile and a pretty word from Ma'am Windles.

One day I went in to buy my usual instalment. I was a big girl then,—in my fifteenth year,—and the cheerful, comely woman would sometimes enter into conversation with me. I laughingly told her that she must be getting rich, for her taffy was in everybody's mouth.

"Well, I 'low I ought to be pretty well off," she said, while a sad look crossed her face,—the first time I had ever seen such an expression there,—"but you see I've had Jimmy to take care of."

I suppose I looked curious. "Of course you didn't know about Jimmy," she said. "No more didn't most folks, for the poor child got crazed at the great fire, and I couldn't find it in my heart to send him away. So I had to pay a man for staying with him, and one way and another, in clothes and medicines, he cost me a heap of money,—well, about all I could make."

"And is Jimmy dead?" She sighed, and nodded her head, while the tears came into her eyes.

"I couldn't afford to go into deep mourning, but God sees the heart, and he knows that there—inside—I wear all my mourning. Yes, miss, the poor, dear fellow was little else than a baby from the time of the fire; but, thanks be to Heaven, the last week of his life he knew me, and actually called me 'mammy dear,'—the very last words I heard him speak before his sense left him."

"And how old was Jimmy?" "He was eighteen, poor fellow, the very day he died; but he didn't know more than a baby, only that last week. I think he knew he was going to leave me,—going where he could catch up with folks, and have his poor mind restored to him."

"He was my oldest boy, and as brave and spright a little man as you might see in a long time. I was only eighteen when he was born, and had just come from the Canadas to settle in this country. Sometimes I've thought ill luck was wished upon me,—but no, he wouldn't 'a' done that,—and she shook her head with a long, wistful look into vacancy. "Well, miss, we buried Jimmy last day before Christmas; he was the eighth child I've laid in the

grave."

"Eight children! And all dead! She smiled a quiet, sad smile. "I've always had to go right on being busy. I never could give up, no, not even for a day, not even for sorrow, for poverty's been upon me like a weight ever since I can remember. But the hardest thing ever I had to bear was the fire. S'pose you've seen a parrara, haven't you, miss?"

"Never in all my life," I said. "Well, then, you've missed a sight. I come from a crowded, Canada city with my husband, and I knowed what it was to see dirt, and poverty, and ill management, and to feel that the air was that bad and stifled it was a pain to breathe it. And when my man told me that he'd a little money, and we were to come to this great country, and live in the West on the parrara, it seemed to me like I was going to heaven. And O, miss, when I'd got there, sure I was the happiest creature in all the world! We'd a little place built of logs,—only two rooms, but large and comfortable enough,—and O, the wide, free country, with the beautiful grass and flowers, and the tall trees, so clean in their trunks away up to the top! We'd see the sky through the chinks, often, but we liked that, and all was so new, and so fresh and different."

"Well, my dear, we'd cleared our land and planted it, and built a snug little L to the house, and the children were growing up beautiful, when one night little Benny, that was my youngest boy then, came into the house and said he wanted to go and see pappy."

"Now my man had gone twenty miles off,—started that very day, and I didn't expect him home till Saturday, that was three days. So I took up little Benny, and I see that his hands and head was hot, and I told him that papa was gone a good ways, to get corn, and flour, and meal for his little boy."

"But still the child cried out that he must go, and I had hard work to pacify him. Milly, my oldest girl, had charge of the children then; she was nine, and there were three younger. In the dead of the night she came to me and said that Benny could hardly breathe."

"Ah, my dear, it was too true. The boy had an awful fever on, and he struggled and fought for breath. I took him up, and I worked over him, but it did no good; he grew worse and worse, till I just sot still and cried. There was nobody within six miles of us, but the man that lived there knew a good deal about yarbs, and was considered quite a doctor. But what was I to do,—father away, and only little children round me?"

"Well, after a time I missed my Milly. If you'll believe me, that child had gone out and caught the pony, and rode him, without any saddle, all that six mile, at the dead o' night. The day was just breaking when she come with the doctor; but bless you, miss, the child wasn't troubled any more with his breathing. He laid right acrost my lap,—a pretty little piece of white clay. I don't often

feel this bad, but some way, all at once,"—she broke out sobbing. "I seemed to see his bright curls, though its many a year they've been covered with parrara mould."

"Well, miss, he were my baby, and in less than a week I'd lost every one of 'em the same way, except my girl and poor Jimmy. Three were laid in the ground, one after the other, and I could see 'em from my door,—three little graves."

"I'm sure I don't know what makes me tell all this long story; but I'm coming to the fire."

"That was six years after, and there were three more children,—another Benny, and two little girls. The weather'd been uncomfortably hot, and pap had gone agin to the town to lay in provisions, when Benny came in one evening and told us there was a great cloud of smoke, that looked red, and seemed rolling away off to the north."

"Something misgave me the moment I see it. But I felt that helpless that I just sot down and cried. Jimmy had run up a little way, for the ground swelled a bit front of the house, and then he came back with a scared look, and called out that it was fire."

"Well, I'd been sick, and I couldn't run with a young babe in my arms, and I just give up; but Jimmy and the girl, they seemed to have the sense at once of men and women. The grass was dry and hot, and they begun at the garden and burnt away from the house, clear down to a little stream that ran perhaps a quarter mile away."

"I'll never forgit how that boy worked, and how the day of judgment seemed come, for we were all afire,—and hot! Well, miss, if we'd been roasting we couldn't hardly have suffered more for a little time. I had to throw water on the house, and the trees were burning, and the great lake of fire, as it looked, rolling on and on! O it makes me shudder to think on't!"

"Run for the river, mother!" cried Jimmy, and he caught one child, and Milly the other; and seeing the house couldn't be saved, we all made for the water."

"What come next, miss, I never could tell. There was a roaring and a thundering. My baby fell out of my arms and was drowned. Jimmy held me up, and kept the one child, and Milly, she hung on to the bank and held the other child. There was a thick red gust, a blinding, awful feeling, and the flame had swept over us and gone on."

"I'll never forget my coming, to and looking for the poor little baby, and going back to see our house all gone, and Milly scorched, and dumb with the trouble, and Jimmy trying to comfort me, and the little dead baby, that had just opened its eyes on the world to be dealt with so cruel, and the crying children, and nothing to eat."

"Don't ask me, miss, how we lived for two miserable days; I couldn't tell ye. Nor how, when my man came home sick, it took the heart out of him; nor how we lived in the open air for weeks, and my man died, and we had to

bury him.

"O, miss, I hope ye'll never think common misfortunes no sort o' trouble. But I've lived through them, and lost all my children, and still lived; and nursed Jimmy, whose head never was right after that year,—and by the help of kind friends, turned an honest penny, and now I'm waiting,—la, miss! there's the post. A letter,—Canada post-mark,—you don't say! Well, now I never was no hand at reading writing. Would it be a trouble to you to read it for me?"

I opened the letter with trembling hand, and read the following:

DEAR MRS. B.—I heard as how you were living a widder, and make bold to renew my proposal, made twenty years ago. I've been traveling with a high family for years, and laid up four hundred pound sterling. My heart is still trow, and I have never so much as once thought of marrying since you told me no. But now I hear you are alone, and so am I. I will send you money enough to come here, and will make you a good husband, God willing.

So no more from your affectionate friend,  
WILLIAM MORRIS.

"Well, to think I cried the widder, and I to believe he wished ill luck upon me. Poor William! if I ever!"

I bought candy but once after that of Ma'am Windles. The shop passed into the hands of a tall, sharp-nosed woman, and the taffy deteriorated under her manipulation. I never heard anything more of Ma'am Windles, only that she had gone to Canada; but I sincerely hope, indeed I almost know, that she is happy."

## Impossibility of Children.

We are too readily discouraged in our efforts to impress religious truth upon the mind of children. The brief period of time which any one idea can keep possession of their minds, and the rapid and abrupt transition of their thoughts, often make our attempts appear a failure when they are not so. Geologists show us the indelible impressions of little birds' feet in solid rock; they must have been made when the rock was soft and pliable; there was a touch, a fitting, and the wanderer was gone on wings swift as thought flies upon when passing over the minds of our little ones, and yet there remains the imprints for all time. An incident once occurred impressing this truth upon my mind.

Ned and James came clattering down from their chamber one morning, exclaiming, "O, auntie, you can't guess what we've been saying. We've been making a resolution," said Ned, "that we would be kind and loving brothers all the week." A few words of approbation and encouragement confirmed their resolution, and they went to their play.

That evening, as I sat alone in the twilight, thinking, two little hands, play-weary, were laid upon my knee, and on them rested a little head which never seemed to weary. Processions of grotesque and incongruous thoughts chased tireless through the brain, and were as tirelessly spoken.

"Have you succeeded in keeping your resolution?" I asked, stroking the hair.

"Y-es," said Ned, doubtfully.

"I suppose," said I, "that in looking back over the day you see some spots where you were not so kind to Jamie as you might have been?"

"Yes," replied he, "I do."

"I think I can tell you a way to make such dark spots fewer," said I. "To-morrow morning, as soon as Jamie has got down stairs, and you can have your room alone, shut the door, and kneel down, and ask God to help you to be kind and loving to Jamie all the day, and beg him to give you strength to resist when Satan tempts you to be unkind and cross." If God sees that you desire his help enough to come and ask for it, you may be sure he will give it to you."

"Auntie, can you guess what pants I've got on?" was the sudden interested query, before the last words were quite gone from my lips. My heart sunk within me. I thought that in the subduing quiet of the darkness, I had arrested the child's attention. I had been speaking with the hope that my words would arm the little soul for its battles with self; but how far astray my hopes had led me! "I might as well try to teach that stone anything, as that child," I exclaimed wearily to myself, as I rose to light the lamp.

The next morning, immediately after breakfast, I had occasion to go to my room. I found Ned on the stairs just before me, and as he passed on to his chamber, I observed that he closed his door. This was an occurrence so unusual, that it arrested my attention, and brought the last evening's conversation to mind. I raised a silent prayer that those words might come back to him, and that his little petition might be heard.

That evening as I sat in the twilight as before, the little hands were again laid upon my knee, and the little head again rested upon them. There followed a few moments' silence, which was a thing so unusual, that I was just casting about in my mind what the cause could be, when the little lips, unequal to longer quiet, opened.

"There are not so many spots as there were yesterday," said the child softly, and still keeping his face in his hands.

"Ah!" said I, "I am delighted to hear it. Did you remember what I said to you last night?"

"Yes," said he, "I did."

"And did you ask God this morning to help you?"

"Yes," was the reply, "and all along through the day, too, and there are not half so many spots to-night."

My heart, which was full of weariness and discouragement the night before, was now full of reproaches, that I should so often have read, and so often have forgotten, "Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise."—*Christian Weekly*,

Never reprove a child with the misdeeds of its parents, no matter how deserving they may be of your censure. It is the very refinement of cruelty, and in the heart of the child there will spring up hatred for you which will never be eradicated.